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Binder

Twine

AND

Farmers'

Interests

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BINDER TWINE and FARMERS' INTERESTS.

(From *Farmer's Sun*, February 3.)

To the Editor of The Sun.

The *Sun* of the 20th of January contained a letter from C. A. Mallory, in which denunciation of "monopoly" takes the place of a fair statement of the case of the cordage and binder twine industry, and angry criticism of public men, who do not agree with Mr. Mallory, is substituted for argument. They are very few who now hold that it is a good thing for a country to have all its eggs in one basket. Farmers do not find a market for their produce among farmers, any more than shoemakers expect to sell their goods to shoemakers. It is the townspeople who consume what the farmer has to sell. The most prosperous agricultural districts are not those farthest away from, but those nearest to, large commercial and manufacturing centers. Not only does the town or city give a cash market for the grain and other bulky produce, but for eggs and butter and milk and poultry, and everything that is profitably produced upon the farm, fruit and vegetables, etc. It is in this way that the farmer is directly and largely concerned in the growth and prosperity

of the towns, and in whatever helps to build up and develop the towns. The man who makes cordage or binder twine in a United States factory eats no Canadian farm produce. The Dingley bill duties were designed to keep Canadian produce out of the United States, and they do. The United States people appreciate the benefit of manufactures. They have seen what a variety of industrial establishments can do for a country. They have seen thriving centers of population growing up everywhere in their land. They have seen that where these centers were most numerous wealth was greatest and most widely distributed.

There is a social side to the question also. It is not good for man to live alone, or for women and children either. All are brightened by intercourse with their fellows of other pursuits. The farmer's family, whose members make frequent visits to the town, whether on business or on pleasure, are brighter, and, as a rule, are cleverer, than those whom distance keeps away. It is good in various ways, therefore, for the farmer and his family, that the town should flourish; and, therefore, the tariff that benefits the town, that causes flourishing towns to grow up throughout the country, is good for the country and for the farmer.

The Ministers at Ottawa, when they were brought face to face with the issue, after they had made enquiries in all parts of Canada, saw that absolute free trade was not likely to be a good thing for the country, and acted accordingly. They left the duties untouched on practically all the products of the farm. They reduced them on many lines of manufactures, but did not abolish them, except in regard to one or two articles, of which binder twine is the most important, as regards the number of factories, the value of plant and the amount of capital invested. Mr. Mallory appeals to the farmers to maintain this state of affairs; why, he knows best. Binder twine is a comparatively small item in the average farmer's expenditure. It does not cost

him so much as his clothing, or groceries, or coal oil, or implements, on all of which there are duties, which Mr. Mallory apparently does not regard as grievous injustices. Yet the abolition of the duty on each or all of them would be as likely to benefit the farmer as the abolition of the duty on binder twine.

The binder twine and cordage manufacturers have only asked to be put on the same footing as other industries—as cotton or woollen manufacturers, or bacon and pork packers. They have pointed out that unless they are put on the same footing as other manufacturers they will be forced to close their mills. Will that benefit the farmer in any way? It will not bring him cheaper twine. Between the competition of the different factories and the sale of the output of the Toronto Central Prison and Kingston Penitentiary factories, the prices are kept as low in Canada as they can be anywhere for goods of similar quality, and in binder twine quality is of quite as much importance as cost. A delay of an hour or two on harvest day, because of inferior twine, makes the cheap article the dearest in the end. The Canadian factories make twine of good quality, and while they supply the market a good quality is assured. All they ask for is such a duty on the foreign-made article as will warrant them in keeping their machinery in operation—such a duty as is put on cottons, or woollens, or sugar, for the benefit of the whole country.

Mr. Mallory, in his letter, speaks of farmers remembering the time when they had to pay 18 cents a pound for binder twine. They can also remember the time when they had to pay 11 and 12 cents a pound for sugar. Sugar is not half that price now; and the same conditions have brought about a reduction in the cost of binder twine. Wheat is not the only thing that has gone down in price. The fibre out of which binder twine is made used to cost from 15 to 20 cents a pound. Now it costs from $3\frac{1}{2}$ to $4\frac{1}{2}$ cents a pound. The manufacture costs about 2 cents a pound, and the storage and marketing about one-half cent a pound.

The twine is sold about 7 cents a pound—a very moderate rate, considering that the manufacturer has to pay cash for the fibre, oil, etc., that he uses; pays cash to his employes, and then waits from four to six months until the twine is sold and paid for.

The Canadian manufacturers give the farmers good twine; they give them cheap twine. They do not seek any such duty as will enable them to charge exorbitant prices. They only want to be secured in the market they now provide for by a duty that will stop unfair competition from the United States, into which country the Canadian factories cannot ship their goods. They only want what the tariff gives to the farmer himself, the home market to compete in. Mr. Mallory's letter advances no reason why their request should be refused.

If the Cordage and Twine-making factories give employment to a thousand people in Canada, there are a thousand people to supply with all the necessities of life. If the factories are closed and the working people dispersed, there is a loss not only to the towns, but to the farmers around them. Do the farmers desire this? Would their interests be promoted by it? Would they get cheaper binder twine by it? The United States manufacturers do not sell cheap where they control the market. They will control the Canadian market if Mr. Mallory's arguments, or rather attempts at arguments, should prevail. They will not, if the reasonable requests of the cordage manufacturers, the Farmers' Binder Twine Company being among them, have the influence they should.

FAIR PLAY

TOWN AND COUNTRY.

From *The Gazette*, Montreal, February 18th, 1898.

A letter from the Farmer's Sun on the subject of binder twine and farmers' interests, printed elsewhere, in its general argument covers more than the case of the industry, attacks upon which called it forth. Its plea that the cordage manufacturers should be put on the same footing as other manufacturers simply asks for justice, and injustice is involved in refusing it. The letter, however, deals with the larger issue of the union of interests between country and town and of the value to the former of whatever policy tends to the development of the latter. The idea that town and country must be opposed to each other, and that the man who invests his money in a manufacturing enterprise must be the fiscal enemy of the man whose capital is his farm, was assiduously cultivated for many years in Canada. It was practically abandoned, however, by the party that made most out of it, the moment its leaders had the responsibility of power placed upon them. A great deal has been said, in and out of Parliament, of the large growth in the pork packing industry, that followed the imposition in 1890 of a stiff protective duty. Not only did the imports into Canada of pork, bacon, hams and lard decline, but the exports rapidly expanded from about half a million in annual value to between three and four millions. The quality of the goods was also so much improved that Canadian Bacon now stands in the front rank in the British market, and commands a ready sale when other foreign meats are left in the warehouses. It is quite possible that for a time the increased duty caused the people in the towns and cities in

Canada to pay more for their hams and bacon; but in a very brief time the increased distribution of money in the country that the enlarged trade brought about, returning to the towns and cities in the course of commerce, more than recompensed them for any temporary loss, and the whole community, town and country, was better off. No more forceful example of what wise protection can do for an industry for which a country is suited has been adduced in all the controversies over protection and free trade. The Canadian farmers who raise the raw material for the pork packing trade, first gained their own market, then established a foothold in that of Great Britain. When Sir Wilfrid Laurier's Government came to power it saw that this was good, and left the pork duties, and, indeed, most of the agricultural product duties, as the Conservatives had made them. The pork and bacon industry is one in which the first benefits went to the farmer. There are others in which, in the same way, the first advantages apparently go to the town and city. The whole country benefits from both classes. This has been more than half recognized by the framers of the present tariff. When it is fully recognized, and the recognition acted on, the country will be better assured of permanent trade prosperity.

